

Frederick County Affordable Housing Council

Policy priorities for 2025

By Gary Bennett and Hugh Gordon

On March 10, Frederick County's Affordable Housing Council (hereafter referred to as "the Council") released its 2025 affordable housing policy priorities.

The Council advises Frederick city and county government officials on housing policy and advocates for safe, sanitary and affordable housing for all Frederick County lower- and middle-income households.

The policy priorities for 2025 do not take into consideration matters likely to be covered by Frederick County's new housing needs assessment and strategic plan currently in the planning stages. The study is being conducted by TPMA Consultants and the county's Division of Housing. Once the draft is presented for public comment, the Council will respond. Following final county approval of the study, the Council will incorporate recommendations from the study into its policy priorities for 2026.

The 2025 policy priorities outlined below are matters deemed important enough to go forward without waiting for completion of the housing needs assessment study.

- **Streamline Frederick County's and the City of Frederick's building permitting process.**

At a September 2024 meeting hosted by the Council, non-profit and for-profit developers and builders indicated that the permitting process is overly cumbersome and costly. The Council has contacted city and county officials to establish a strategy and action plan to resolve permitting obstacles, working with the public sector and developer/builder stakeholders to address these matters with established timelines.

- **Encourage municipalities, the public and other stakeholders beyond the City of Frederick and Frederick County to develop relationships with the Council regarding housing policy best practices.**

The Council will develop a strategy and action plan in the second quarter of 2025 to address specific municipalities at public forums. Independent of this effort, the Council will reach out to invite municipal officials, the public and stakeholders to monthly Council meetings.

- **Continue working with Frederick County and municipalities on implementation of area plans as part of the Livable Fredrick Master Plan.**

As such, the Council will continue its active participation with the Housing Element Advisory Group and offer recommendations. It is also working with the county on attaining the goals set out in the 2023 county executive's Housing and Quality of Life Transition Plan.

- **Appoint a Council member or consultant to act as liaison with county and city legislative officials with a goal to accomplish the recommendations of the forthcoming Frederick County Housing Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan.**

Hugh Gordon, chair of the Council, commented that accomplishing these priorities demonstrate a proactive effort on the part of the Council to address one of the greatest needs existing in the Frederick community: "The need for affecting implementation and the potential for assisting seniors, school teachers, police officers, firefighters, restaurant workers, and other vulnerable residents of Frederick County to achieve their dream of living in a safe, sanitary and affordable home."

Historically, the Council has been quite successful in developing housing priorities and encouraging elected officials to give them fair consideration.

Last year, the Council was instrumental in advocating to update the city's Moderately Priced Development Units (MPDU) ordinance. The ordinance now encourages increased development of affordable housing in the city by requiring

developers to pay \$2 per square foot for every unit in the development if they opt out of building the required number of MPDUs.

The Council also pushed for updating the 2016 Frederick County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment study to better reflect current housing and economic realities and to develop a strategic plan to address the findings. This project is now in the early planning stages.

Finally, the Council has helped institute the implementation of the City of Frederick's rental registration and inspection program and encouraged municipalities in the county to allow construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), many of which are doing that.

The Frederick County Affordable Housing Council meets the second Tuesday of each month at 2:30 pm at a location designated by the Council. Confirm meeting dates and location by checking

<https://www.frederickcountymd.gov/6371/Affordable-Housing-Council> or by calling the Frederick County Division of Housing at 301-600-3518.

The issues are difficult but the stakes are high for all of us. The Frederick County Affordable Housing Council invites you to participate.

Meetings are open to the public and public participation is highly encouraged. Agendas can be obtained at the website noted above. Public comment is welcome at all meetings.

Gary Bennett is a retired association executive with no stake in the housing market except for being a concerned citizen. Hugh Gordon is the association executive for the Frederick County Association of Realtors and has decades of experience as a mortgage banker. They are long-time Frederick County residents and members of Frederick County's Affordable Housing Council.